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absorbent through a curtain coater, or other means of adding a liquid to a absorbent sheet familiar to those skilled in the art.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 31, to read as follows:

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As noted above, the binder utilized in accordance with the present invention can also be a soluble bonding medium that can be incorporated with the pulped cellulosic fibers, either in fiber form, or as particles or granules. If desired, the bonding medium can also be coated onto solvent insoluble fibers, such as cellulosic fibers, which can then be distributed throughout the matrix of fibers making up each of the strata of the present invention. It is presently preferred that the bonding medium comprise a fiber and be mixed with the components of each stratum prior to the formation of the absorbent. The use of soluble bonding mediums with cellulose fiber webs is disclosed in U. S. patent application Serial No. 08/669,406, now U.S. Patent No. 5,837,627, filed July 3, 1996, entitled "Fibrous Web Having Improved Strength and Method of Making the Same," expressly incorporated herein by reference.

In the Claims:

Amend Claims 1, 8, 13-18, 32, 75, and 77 as follows, and cancel Claims 24, 25, 33, and 62-74.

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Sub E1
1. (Amended) An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first stratum and the second stratum;
the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder;
the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder ; and

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Sub E1 Cont the transition zone comprising fibers from the first stratum and the second stratum commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

Sub E2 8.7 (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the first stratum has a pore size greater than the pore size of the second stratum.

106 9.13. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the synthetic fibers comprise polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

10.14. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the synthetic fibers are selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, nylon, latex, and rayon fibers.

11.15. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1, wherein the first stratum further comprises natural fibers, wherein the natural fibers are cellulosic fibers selected from the group consisting of cotton, wool, wood pulp, straw, and kenaf fibers.

Sub E3 12.16. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein at least one binder comprises a fibrous binding material.

13.17. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the fibrous binding material comprises bicomponent binding fibers.

14.18. (Amended) The composite of Claim 1 wherein at least one binder comprises a wet strength agent.

207 Sub E4 32.24 (Amended) An absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first stratum and the second stratum; the first stratum comprising polyethylene terephthalate fibers and bicomponent binding fibers; the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a wet strength agent; and the transition zone comprising fibers from the first stratum and the second stratum

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commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

~~SUBJECT 39 75 ES~~ (Amended) A foam-formed absorbent composite comprising a first stratum, a second stratum, and a transition zone intermediate and coextensive with the first stratum and the second stratum;

~~28~~ the first stratum comprising synthetic fibers and a binder;

the second stratum comprising crosslinked cellulosic fibers and a binder; and

the transition zone comprising fibers from the first stratum and the second stratum commingled substantially uniformly across the composite's width and along the composite's length.

~~79 SUBJECT 41 75 EV~~ (Amended) The composite of Claim 75 wherein [the] at least one binder is one of bicomponent binder fibers and a wet strength agent.